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The following report is one of a series on Arab notables in Palestine. Other reports of this series are A-14529 on Musa al Alami and 801068 (OID accession number) on Hajj Amin el Husseni, and A-20798 on Arif el Arif. (G-817)

Muhieddin Effendi, an Arab of vision and pioneer banana-planter of Palestine, is about 82 years old, dons the jubah and turbaned tarboosh, has never been modern in aspect, but is most modern and far-seeing in vision. His education was limited.

1. About 1879 - 1880 he first bought land in the plain of Jericho, along the southern bank of Wad el Kelt. He also purchased the springs of Fawwar and Wad el Kelt in the rocky chasm of the latter name.

During the first years Muhieddin flooded bits of land, planted grain and vegetables, and irrigated with the winter overflow from the Kelt. In drought years the Kelt dried up prematurely, and his crops failed - the water supply was too insecure.

2. By 1913 he had obtained a clear title deed to the water in the Kelt gorge and the tract of desert south of the Wad el Kelt, from the foothills to the Jordan and stretching nearly as far as the Dead Sea.

A. There are remains of some six ancient aqueducts in the gorge. Muhieddin decided to repair one to give him a steady supply of water, summer as well as winter.

B. Just prior to "World War One" Muhieddin borrowed 4000 gold pounds and invested most in imported cement. The outbreak of war put a stop to importation, but nothing daunted, he found two Greek entrepreneurs in the Jordan Valley had stocks of cement. With this he pushed on with the reconstruction.

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C. At this time there were many deserters from the Turkish army, among them Christian Arab and Armenian artisans. These he hired, fed and lodged in the mill or in the Greek Orthodox Convent of St. George. He fed as well a band of armed Turkish deserters, who protected them, and any officer who might have sought the deserters he kept "content".

D. When his money gave out, he started dealing in wheat at Kerak in Transjordan, supplying it to the Turkish army, and made 4500 Turkish gold pounds, all of which, along with the income from the mill, was in turn invested in the aqueduct. From the income of small irrigated vegetable gardens around the mill, he maintained a large family dependent upon him.

E. The aqueduct was finally completed about the time of Allenby's occupation.

F. Soon after this Muhieddin Effendi started planting bananas on large tracts. Up till then the banana was a rare fruit, grown only in small quantities in the orange groves of Jaffa and Jericho.

A. When the plantation outgrew the water supply he extended the canal up to Ain Fawwar (the "bubbler") an intermittent spring, that may fail in drought years.

4. About this time Jerusalem had outgrown its old cistern and inadequate water supply piped in from Solomon's Pools, & Ain Farah. The municipality, disregarding Muhieddin's claims to the ownership of the Fawwar water, built 4 1/2 hrs. of road to the spring, and at a cost of £P 15,000, piped and pumped the water up to the then existing Ain Farah installation, where it was twice repumped to Jerusalem. During the second summer the Fawwar spring dried up, and a continuation of the pipelines was made down to the Wad el Kelt spring. In recompense for half the water the Municipality paid Muhieddin £P 3000 the first year, and £P 2500 the second.

A. As soon as the first municipal contract was signed, Muhieddin Effendi pushed a concrete canal from the end of his aqueduct right to this far-flung groves, thus saving as much from waste as the Jerusalem Municipality was taking, so that his plantations did not suffer, nor did he have to restrict the area. Thus he was the first person in Palestine in modern times to construct and privately own an irrigating aqueduct notable for its length, cost, and the vision behind it. Since then, Government and Jewish communal colonies have constructed other much advertised irrigating systems.

B. With no wastage now through leakage and seepage, Muhieddin was able to irrigate 350 dunams of banana plantation, and succeeded in raising on a commercial scale, fruit which before that time had been largely luxury in Palestine.

His example has been widely followed, so that the Arabs of Palestine now own 3000 dunams of banana plantations, mostly in the lower Jordan Valley, with an addition of 1100 on the Transjordan side of the Valley. Likewise the Jews, mostly the Kibbutz settlements around Galilee, the Middle Jordan Valley, and less in the Coastal Plain, own another 2500 dunams, a total of 5400 dunams.

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yielding a yearly average crop of 6800 tons, valued at £ 150,000.

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